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ABSTRACT

A behavior modification program was implemented to improve attendance and punctuality patterns of kindergarten students attending a small, rural elementary school. Also incorporated into the intervention were self-esteem and parent involvement components. Motivational strategies used were: a token economy; group-oriented behavior management techniques; high-interest; small group activities; and verbal and nonverbal approval responses. Success was assessed by pre- and post-implementation comparison of attendance data. Results indicated that attendance patterns can be affected by teacher-parent cooperation. Related materials are appended. (Author/RH)

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IMPROVING ATTENDANCE OF KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS THROUGH BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION TECHNIQUES

by

BETTY D. SCHOFIELD

A Practicum Report
submitted to the Faculty of the Center for the Advancement of Education of Nova University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science

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Authorship Statement

I hereby testify that this paper and the work it reports are entirely my own. When it has been necessary to draw from the work of others, published or unpublished, I have acknowledged such work in accordance with accepted scholarly and editorial practice. I give this testimony freely, out of respect for the scholarship of other workers in the field and in the hope that my own work, presented here, will earn similar respect.

Signed: Betty D. Schofield

Betty D. Schofield

Abstract

Improving Attendance of Kindergarten Students through Behavior Modification Techniques.
Schofield, Betty D., 1990: Practicum Report, Nova University, The Center for the Advancement for Education.
Descriptors: Attendance/Dropout Programs/Dropouts/ Attendance Patterns/Absenteeism/Punctuality/Tardiness/ Academic Failure/Low Achievement/Retention/Failure/Grade Repetition/Kindergarten/Parental Involvement/Family School Relationship/High Risk Students/Self-Esteem/Self-Concept/Truancy/Potential Dropouts/Parent Teacher Cooperation/School Holding Power.

This practicum describes a behavior modification program to improve attendance and punctuality patterns of kindergarten students in a small, rural elementary school setting. Building self-esteem and parental involvement were incorporated into the program. The positive, motivational strategies used during the program were: a token economy; group-oriented behavior management techniques; high-interest, small group activities; and verbal and nonverbal approval responses. Success was assessed by pre- and post- implementation comparison of attendance data. Results indicate that attendance patterns can be affected by teacher parent cooperation.

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Practicum Title Improving Attendance of Kindergarten Students through Behavior Modification Techniques

Student's Name Betty D. Schofield

Program Site Gainesville Date 6 - 21 - 1990

Observer's Name Lacy Vaughan Lacy G Vaughn
(please print------and sign)

Observer's position Principal Phone # 904-542-7818

Observer's comment on impact of the project (handwritten):

I have, through the use of personal interviews and direct observation, monitored the implementation of the above stated Nova Practicum from its conception to its completion.

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CHAPTER I

Purpose

Background

This practicum was implemented in one of the oldest schools in the area; with the structure dating back to 1910. The school was actually founded at a near-by site in 1874. Steps have been initiated to have the school listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The stable population of the community and the rural district is conservative in nature, with the major industries being farming, logging, fishing, and employment with the Department of Corrections. The economic structure of the area ranges from middle to poverty levels. The school population of 435 students consists of 99 percent white and 1 percent black or Asian.

Grades kindergarten through three consist of three self-contained classrooms. Grades four through six are self-contained, except for changing classes to attend ability-grouped language arts classes. In the primary grades, the classroom teacher-student ratio is one to 22. Each teacher has an aide for an average of 30 minutes per day. In addition, the school

has one varying exceptionalities unit, one and one-half units of Chapter I Compensatory Reading, and one-fourth migrant education unit. Additional support staff includes a guidance counselor, primary specialist, speech therapist, and two psychologists who are contracted on an as-needed basis for testing and consultation purposes.

Implementation of this practicum was organized and executed according to the following procedures.

The writer, the primary specialist, developed, organized, and distributed all materials, and compiled all evaluative data. Interpretation of the data resulted in program modifications, when necessary.

The writer implemented this practicum. Others who were directly involved were the kindergarten classroom teachers who reinforced the principles and techniques that were introduced and employed during small group and pull-out sessions.

Problem Statement

Nationally, as well as locally, educators are initiating programs geared toward keeping students in school. In 1987, statistics indicated that nearly one-fourth of the students who entered first grade would leave school before high school graduation (Larsen & Shertzer, 1987, p. 164). Many of these dropouts have not mastered requisite skills for job placement. Unemployed dropouts are more likely to become involved in crime. According to Mary Hatwood Futrell, president of the National Education Association in 1986, 60 percent of all prison inmates in the United States were high school dropouts. It was estimated that the yearly cost of incarceration of an inmate in a correctional facility is ten times greater than the cost of providing a year of schooling to a public school student. These youths become alienated from society, their self-esteem plummets, and often, aggressive behavior becomes a pattern; the direct and indirect costs of dropouts to society are staggering. Furthermore, children of dropouts have a tendency

to become dropouts themselves. A self-perpetuating cycle often results.

One of the first steps in developing a program to lower the dropout rate is to identify characteristics of dropout-prone students. Statistics, at first glance, seem to indicate that race is an important factor since Hispanics drop out more than blacks, and blacks drop out more than whites. But a study in Boston by Wheelock (1986) revealed that in regard to race, student dropouts partially mirror the school population. Table I illustrates this relationship. Other research results (Edelman, 1986 & Strother, 1986) have supported these findings.

Table I

Comparison of the Percentage of the School Population and Dropouts by Race

	% Population	% Dropouts
Whites	29.2	28
Blacks	47.7	48
Hispanics	13.7	18

Note. 1986 Boston School Department study of the graduating class of 1985.

Therefore, economic factors seem to have a greater impact than racial factors. Students from poor families are three or four times more likely to drop out than those from more affluent households (Edelman, 1986). Students from families with a single parent, students whose older siblings or parents were dropouts, and students from homes with weak educational support systems are other characteristics of the dropout-prone students' families (Wheelock, 1986).

In addition to these factors involving the family, researchers have pinpointed some characteristics more directly associated with the students. Ross, as quoted by Larsen and Shertzer (1987, p. 167)

> listed five characteristics shared by likely dropouts: (a) a record of truancy, or excessive absence from class, (b) little participation in school activities, (c) low or failing grades in two or more academic classes, (d) difficulty communicating with teachers and other students, and (e) little interest in classwork.

Wheelock (1986) included the fact that potential dropouts have a history of repeating a grade at least once and, therefore, are over-age for their grade placement. D. B. Strother (1986) reports that a large number of dropouts are male, had mothers

who worked outside the home, and had parents with low educational expectations for their children. Their parents were disinterested in monitoring either their school or non-school activities. These students had less opportunity to participate in learning activities outside of school, read less, did less homework, and had more in-school disciplinary problems.

Since no single causal factor exists, programs to decrease the dropout rate have varied greatly. Generally, the programs have involved middle and high school students. School counselors have started support programs to build self-esteem and give encouragement to at-risk students (Ruben, 1989; Wehlage & Rutler, 1989). Attendance outreach programs, including communication between the home and school, community-backed referral networking, incentive programs, and punitive actions are some examples of these programs (Gerics, 1988; Miller, 1986).

The dropout rate is still too high despite the actions that have been initiated at the upper levels of the educational institutions. Therefore, early childhood educators must, and are, becoming more directly involved. On the national and the state department levels, funding for Headstart and several other early childhood

intervention programs is a priority. Florida school law (1989) statute numbers 232.301 and 232.303 lay the groundwork for preventive programs which would target students at grades four through eight who are likely to become academic underachievers, failures, truants, or dropouts.

Many of the causal factors, such as economic factors, race, and the parents' educational attainment, are not amenable to the school's intervention unless reversal of the dropout cycle occurs. But one key causal factor, absenteeism, can be influenced through school- and community-based involvement (Wickert, 1987: Marockie & Jones, 1987; Bage, 1989). According to Wheelock (1986), one of the strongest predictors of dropping out is a pattern of truancy and non-attendance (absenteeism for reasons other than truancy). Poor attendance and punctuality patterns become important links in a chain of factors that eventually lead to premature ending of one's school career.

These attendance patterns affect students into adulthood since attitudes and habits developed during the early, formative years of a child's life become less and less amenable to correction. This has been evidenced by the fact that colleges and employers

frequently request attendance records of applicants.

Statistics released by the Florida Department of Education indicate that the dropout rate during the 1987-1988 school year for the local school district was above the state and regional rates (Appendix A:37). Table II contains this information.

Table II

State, Regional, and Local Dropout Rates

	% Dropouts
Local School District	10.69
Region	6.47
State of Florida	6.84

Note. 1987-1988 Florida Department of Education statistics.

Therefore, the problem which was addressed during implementation of this practicum was lowering the absentee and tardiness rates of kindergarten students who were identified as having excessively high rates. To identify students and measure success, attendance records were examined prior to implementation, and at the termination,

of this practicum project by the classroom teachers and the project writer. Referral by the classroom teachers was the primary source for substantiating the need for a project such as this. All the kindergarten teachers indicated that excessive absenteeism and tardiness were affecting the acquisition of knowledge and experience levels of the students. Lack of school experience would affect the readiness of the students for first grade. Criteria for determining which students needed to be targeted for participation were:

a. students who were absent or tardy at least 10 percent of the time; and/or
b. absenteeism or tardiness were affecting the student's chances of promotion; and/or
c. absenteeism or tardiness had increased substantially after the Christmas vacation.

Children who met the criteria, but absenteeism was unavoidable due to lengthy childhood illnesses, such as measles, mumps, or chicken pox, were not selected for membership in the target population. Nineteen percent of the local kindergarten population was targeted as having excessive absenteeism rates. Since research indicates absenteeism is an indication of future dropouts, a program to encourage better school attendance was needed

to help lower the future dropout rates for the local school district.

In addition, one student was referred for excessive tardiness. This student was tardy 18 percent of the time and missed the first half-hour of class each day. Therefore, this student was targeted, not only for the percentage of school missed, but also for the amount of valuable instructional time lost.

Outcome Objectives

As determined by a comparison of pre- and post-implementation attendance and punctuality records, the students of the target group were expected to accomplish, upon completion of the ten-week implementation period, the following:

1. Twenty percent of the target group would increase their attendance rates by a minimum of twenty percent.

2. Ten percent of the target group would increase their attendance rates by a minimum of ten percent.

3. Twenty percent of the target group would increase their punctuality rates by a minimum of twenty percent.

4. Ten percent of the target group would increase their punctuality rates by a minimum of ten percent.

It was expected that the final data would demonstrate

that positive motivational activities and home-school communication would influence student attendance and punctuality patterns. Subsequently, the students in the target group would gain important instructional time in school.

CHAPTER II

Research and Solution Strategy

Research

The preface for this research project was rooted in a quote by Lauro F. Cavazos (1989, p. 7) who stated, "Today's dropout was yesterday's at-risk student; that at-risk student was once a very young child in need of intervention." Many of the at-risk children were at-risk even before birth. These children are in need of every intervention, available to educators, to increase the likelihood of attaining a high school diploma.

While the school system must intervene at all levels, by helping children who are in trouble academically and enticing dropouts back into the system, the key is to rescue the young child before trouble begins.

Many approaches have been taken to help alleviate the dropout problem by focusing on improving attendance. Attendance is viewed as a key indicator of future achievement since research has revealed a positive correlation between the two (Wickert, 1987). Studies indicate students who reverse their poor attendance patterns often begin to be more successful

(Rood, 1989). These same studies also indicate the reverse; that students who attend less regularly earn lower grades and show less-than-expected learning gains.

Another predictor of future dropouts is retention in one or more of the early grade levels. Schreiber, as cited by Larsen and Shertzer (1987), estimated that the student who failed during the first or second grade had an 80 percent chance of becoming a dropout. Many chronically absent students become retention candidates since there is limited opportunity for exposure to academic material. Subsequently, school systems are trying transition classes, non-graded systems, and other methods to curb the retention rates at the elementary level.

Absenteeism can affect yet another predictor of a future dropout -- success in reading. Being available to learn the reading process is necessary for becoming a successful reader. Reading is a prerequisite skill for achievement in social studies, science, English, spelling, and many math skills, such as computation of real world problems. Therefore, improvement of attendance can lessen the effects of other dropout predictors concurrently. Marockie

and Jones (1987, p. 203) summed it up very nicely when they wrote, "With increased attendance comes increased learning, higher involvement with schooling, success in meeting participatory goals, a better self-image, and therefore, school persistence."

Home-school communication intervention (Marockie and Jones, 1987) was adopted by Ohio County Schools, in Wheeling, West Virginia. A home-school visitor conducted exit interviews in the homes of dropouts and counseled and visited potential dropouts. Additionally, a re-entry program was developed to help these students experience success. Other important aspects of the program was the institution of a "Care Call" which was made to each student whose name appeared on daily absentee lists at the junior high and elementary school levels. A community-backed referral network cooperated to help families keep students in school. The dropout rate after initiation of the Home-School Communication program fluctuates between 5 percent and 11 percent instead of the previous 30 percent rate (Marockie and Jones, 1987).

Another approach to increasing attendance and lowering the dropout rate, according to Larsen and Shertzer (1987), is the provision of counseling and

support groups for at-risk children to enable them to develop survival skills, such as: assertiveness training, social skills, and stress reduction. Counselors need to be aware that personal change is a laborious process.

Districts have attempted to improve attendance by the adoption of one of three types of policies (Rood, 1989). These are:

a. provision of incentives;
b. dispensing punitive consequences; or
c. penalizing students academically after a predetermined number of absences occur.

These policies have provided limited success with some types of truant students. Before instituting these policies, legal ramifications must be carefully considered.

The San Jacinto School district in California established a School Attendance Review Board (SARB) to increase school attendance (Wickert, 1987). Student conferences, parent-student-school-representative conferences and, if necessary, conferences with the parents and the attendance board were utilized. The board consisted of a panel of school-related

individuals who convened to support and aid parents in getting their children to school. Outside public social service agencies were involved when appropriate. Extrinsic rewards were used to support the attendance boards's activities. Average daily attendance improved from 94.2 percent in 1980-81 to 97.4 percent in 1984-85. Over this same period, perfect attendance increased from 73 to 147 students (Wickert, 1987).

In Virginia, the Hopewell Public Schools system chose to focus on grades kindergarten through seven to reach students before entrenchment of poor attendance patterns. This approach was more punitive and involved using a network of welfare and legal systems to penalize students or parents if poor attendance patterns persisted. Social and legal agency representatives submitted names of at-risk children to be discussed at monthly meetings. Often, the names of the same children appeared on all lists. This networking system was reported to be an effective tool (Bage, 1989).

In summary, successful attendance improvement programs have involved a multiplicity of approaches. The key to success seemed to be that good attendance was viewed as important to, and stressed by, school staff.

Solution Strategy

Networking with outside social service agencies, health care individuals, and the court system would entail district- or school-wide team planning and implementation, as would the use of an attendance board. This would be entirely beyond the scope of this project. Therefore, after reviewing the literature and considering all options, the solutions deemed most appropriate by the writer of this practicum were to employ behavior modification techniques and to engage the students in activities that built self-esteem and fostered positive feelings toward school experiences.

Behavior modification techniques were founded on the use of one principle of applied behavior analysis which was expressed by Kerr and Nelson (1983, p. 82) as "behavior is strengthened or maintained by reinforcement." Therefore, to strengthen improvement of attendance patterns, a token economy system was established, whereby students exchanged tokens for tangible reinforcers. To reinforce the parents for helping the students to attend school regularly, letters were sent expressing the positive results

of the target group. Since attendance problems at the kindergarten level are primarily due to parental attitudes and values, it was extremely important to elicit their support. This writer agreed with Cavazos (1989) who said that principals and teachers must find ways to draw parents into the educational process for success to occur.

In addition, an altered form of the Hero Method, a group-oriented behavior management strategy, was implemented. This involved using the classroom students' influence to foster appropriate behavior (Salend, 1987). Special privileges were earned by and for the entire class after the accumulation of five days of 100 percent attendance and 100 percent punctuality. That is, each day that every member of the class was present, and on time, would count toward the accumulation of the five day goal.

Nonverbal and verbal approval techniques were used by this writer and the classroom teachers to reinforce and strengthen the other methods of behavior modification. Moreover, improvement of feelings of self-esteem and the fostering of positive attitudes toward school seemed to result.

The primary task of this practicum was to increase attendance and improve punctuality of a targeted group of kindergarten students. By improving attendance patterns and promoting positive self-concepts through the use of behavior modification techniques and eliciting parental involvement, this project sought to provide the foundation for later school success for at-risk students.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Implementation of this practicum was organized and executed according to the following procedure. The writer and implementor designed, organized, and distributed materials, compiled the evaluative data, and interpreted and altered contents accordingly. The target group was comprised of 14 kindergarten students who were selected by the classroom teachers and the writer jointly. The project was conducted under the supervision of the writer's principal.

The following timeline was implemented.

Week 1:

1. Informational letter was sent to parents to elicit support (Appendix B: 39, 40).

2. Activity One: 'Introductory meeting with the students to explain the purpose of the project, including a discussion of the value of attending school regularly and being punctual every day

3. Activity Two: "I am Special" buttons
Each day a student was punctual and/or present, a token (smile sticker) was displayed on the "I am Special"

button (Appendix C: 42).

4. Provided verbal and nonverbal approvals daily.

5. Activity Three: Magic Writing

This activity was changed from the original plan to expose lemon juice writing by holding it over a lighted light bulb after the writer attempted the activity prior to class. The length of time necessary to expose the mesage was greater than the length of an average kindergarten student's attention span. Rather than use a candle because of the potential danger, the students wrote a message (_student's name_ is special) with phenolphthalein. To expose the message, household ammonia was sprayed over the writing. The message turned red. As it dried, the message disappeared, then reappeared when resprayed. A discussion followed about the magic of school and friendship. Students were encouraged to think about their own special characteristics. Also, the participants named special things about other members of the group.

6. Activity Four: Hero Method Behavioral Technique (Salend, 1987). The letters P, A, R, T, and Y were written on separate three by five inch cards. The cards were displayed in each classroom with the letters facing toward the wall. Each letter was revealed, in sequence,

each day that all children were present. When all the letters were revealed, the class was rewarded with a party (Appendix D:44). One of the classrooms was not successful in reaching the requirement of 100 percent attendance. The criteria for that classroom was adjusted so a letter was turned when 20 out of 23 students were present which ensured success.

7. Exchanged tokens for tangible prize when the student was present or punctual five times per week.

8. Sent "I am Special" buttons home weekly. Parents could see how many tokens were earned during that week and could reinforce attendance with praise.

Weeks 2 - 3:

1. Displayed new "I am Special" buttons weekly. Continued rewarding attendance and punctuality with daily tokens. Continued verbal and nonverbal approval responses daily.

2. Activity Five: Happy Feelings Reproducible taken from Lois and Friends: What's Special about You? This is a black-line master booklet which contains written permission to reproduce.

This was a cut and paste activity involving things that make a person happy (Appendix E:46). Students discussed

the pictures after cutting and pasting them to the take-home sheet. Each child was given an opportunity to explain how the items made them feel happy.

3. Continued the Hero Method Behavioral Technique.

4. Exchanged tokens for tangible rewards.

Weeks 4 - 6:

1. Continued token system by displaying a three-tiered rainbow for each child (Appendix F:48). A portion was colored each day the child was present or punctual. Provided verbal and nonverbal approval responses daily.

2. Continued the Hero Method Behavioral Technique.

3. Activity Six: Helping Others Reproducible This activity focused on a worksheet which was used to elicit a discussion about helping someone who had a bad day at school. Students discussed causes for feeling bad or sad, times when the student had experienced a bad day, and ways friends could help someone who had had a bad day (Appendix G:50).

4. Assessed the project by analysing attendance data at the end of week four.

5. Sent letters to all kindergarten parents reporting the success of the project at the end of week four (Appendix H:52).

6. Exchanged tokens for tangible rewards.

Weeks 7 - 9:

1. Displayed a star for each student. Rewarded attendance or punctuality with an appropriate sticker daily (Appendix I:54). Continued verbal and nonverbal approval responses daily.

2. Continued the Hero Method Behavioral Technique.

3. Activity Seven: Feelings Reproducible
This worksheet was used to encourage a discussion about feelings (Appendix J:56,57).

4. Activity Eight: "Fun" session which involved the students with current electricity and conductivity. There was too much humidity for the proposed static electricity activity to be successful.

5. Exchanged tokens for tangible rewards.

6. Sent letters to parents reporting the success of the project at the end of week eight (Appendix K:59).

Week 10:

1. Displayed blue ribbons for daily token collection (Appendix L:61). Continued verbal and nonverbal approvals daily.

2. Exchanged tokens for tangible rewards.

3. Presented awards and prizes commemorating the

group's improved attendance and punctuality during graduation programs. This opportunity was taken to remind parents of the importance of continuing good attendance practices next year when the students would be in first grade.

Since assessment of attendance data at the end of week four indicated an improvement in attendance, the writer did not modify procedures. Individual activities were changed (noted previously) when problems occurred.

Based on the results of the comparison of pre- and post-implementation attendance data, the practicum was evaluated upon its short-term goals. The comparison data determined the success, both generally and specifically, of the activities and techniques that were used during implementation.

CHAPTER IV

Results

The objective of this practicum was to improve the target group's attendance and punctuality rates. With success criteria written into the objectives, improvement was statistically evaluated as stated in the outcome objectives. Charts on pages 28 through 30 contain support data. The results were the following:

1. Sixty-two percent of the target group increased their attendance rates by a minimum of twenty percent.

2. Sixty-nine percent of the target group increased their attendance rates by a minimum of ten percent.

3. One hundred percent of the target group increased their punctuality rates by a minimum of twenty percent.

4. One hundred percent of the target group increased their punctuality rates by a minimum of ten percent.

Even though the percentage improvement indicated success, many outside variables affected the outcome. For example, Classroom A had an epidemic of flu-like symptoms during the tenth week of implementation which affected their percentages of improvement. See Table IV (page 29) for the results when figured by averaging the first nine weeks' attendance data.

Another situation attributed to negative results for two students (one and two) in Classroom B. Since the parents were informed of the probability of retention of their children at the beginning of second semester, this writer concluded that the high absentee rates reflect the resulting frustrations felt by the parents. In support of this assumption, when student number two's parents were later informed, at the end of week two of the implementation period, that continued academic progress would warrant promotion, attendance improved accordingly.

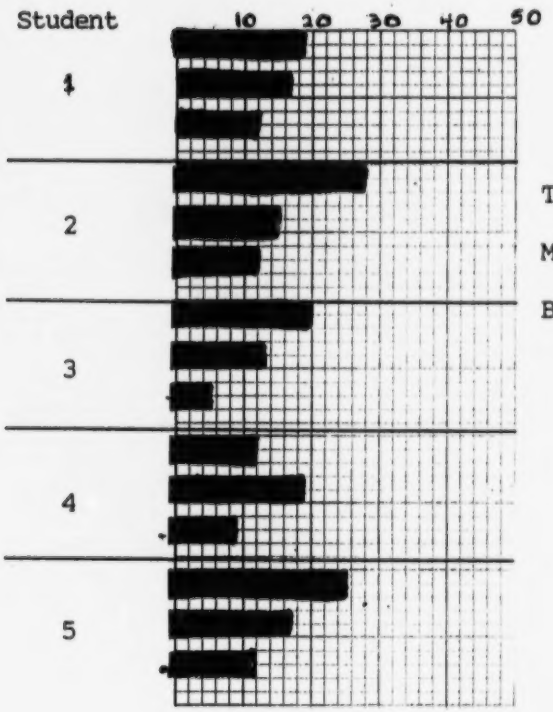
Therefore, this project seems to verify that attendance can be affected by involving parents, positive reinforcement with a token economy, and building self-esteem with positive interaction. Students became aware of the importance of regular attendance and seemed to encourage each other to attend each day. Evaluative comments by the classroom teachers and students were highly favorable and positive. All agree that these methods proved effective with the majority of the students.

Table III

Attendance Data

Student	Absences per week 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
Classroom A											
1	3	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	3	8
2	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	9
3	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	4	6
4	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	5	9
5	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	3	8
Classroom B											
1	0	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	12
2	2	2	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	7
3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
4*	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	4
5	3	1	1	2	1	0	4	1	1	2	16
6	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	5
7	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	2	1	1	7
Classroom C											
1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	2	4
2	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3

* Punctuality



Top = Pre-implementation
Percentages of Days Absent
Middle = Post-implementation
Percentages of Days Absent
Bottom = Post-implementation
Percentages of Days Absent
Less Week 10

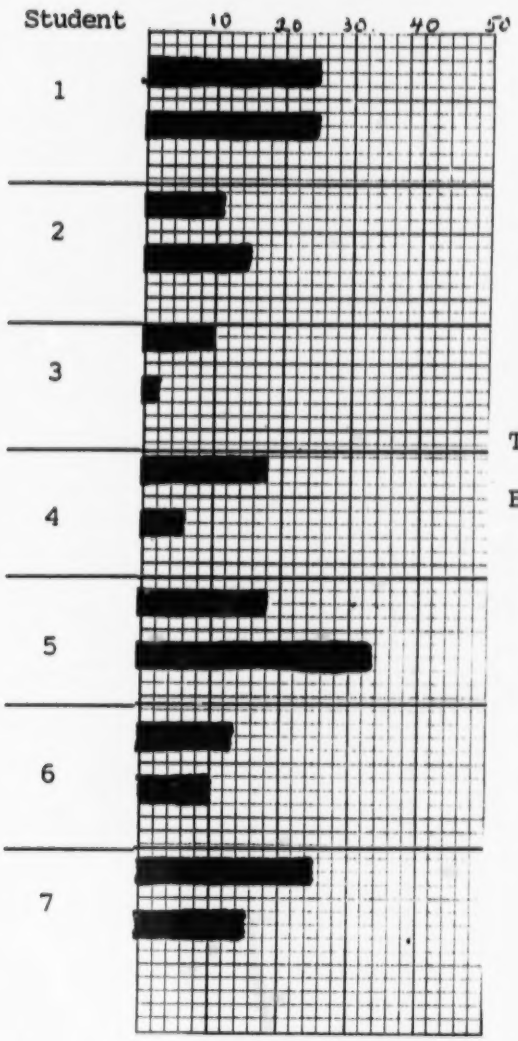
Figure I

A Comparison of Pre- and Post-Implementation
Attendance Data Percentages
For Classroom A

Table IV

Attendance Improvement Percentages
For Classroom A

Student	% With Week Ten	% Without Week Ten
1	11	37
2	46	50
3	35	75
4	-42	25
5	32	52



Top = Pre-implementation
Percentages of Days Absent
Bottom = Post-implementation
Percentages of Days Absent

Figure II

A Comparison of Pre- and Post-Implementation Attendance Data Percentages For Classroom B

Figure III

A Comparison of Pre- and Post- Implementation
Attendance Data Percentages
For Classroom C

Table VI

Attendance Improvement Percentages for Classroom C

Student	% Improvement
1	65
2	77

CHAPTER V

Recommendations

Since the outcome objectives of this practicum were achieved, the basic program will be recommended to the principal and kindergarten teachers as a method to encourage students to attend school consistently. This program can be implemented more easily, with less disruption to daily schedules, by the classroom teacher. Therefore, it will be recommended that each teacher incorporate a program such as this into their own daily schedule. Also, since all students would benefit from the self-esteem building aspects of the program, the reproducibles will be shared with any teachers who express an interest in incorporating the material into their curriculum.

Futhermore, the writer will recommend the Hero Method Behavioral Technique for teachers of classrooms with excessive absenteeism, irregardless of the grade level.

Additionally, the importance of implementing an attendance improvement program at the beginning, rather than the end, of the year will be stressed.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Florida Department of Education Statistics

STATUTORY DEFINITION OF DROPOUT: A student who leaves school for any reason except death before graduation or completion of a program of studies without transferring to another public or non-public school or other educational institution.
--Section 228.041(29), Florida Statutes

9-12 Dropout Rates. 1987-1988

REGION/DISTRICT	TOTAL 9-12 DROPOUTS	PERCENT MALE	PERCENT FEMALE	PERCENT WHITE	PERCENT BLACK	PERCENT HISPANIC	ASIAN/ PACIFIC ISLANDER	INDIAN ALASKA NATIVE	OVERALL 9-12 RATE
PANHANDLE									
BAY	410	58.78	41.22	87.80	10.00	0.73	1.22	0.24	6.66
CALHOUN	64	25.00	75.00	79.69	20.31	0	0	0	13.25
ESCAMBIA	546	60.99	39.01	73.44	23.81	0.55	2.20	0	4.23
FRANKLIN	30	63.33	36.67	90.00	10.00	0	0	0	7.96
GADSDEN	80	60.00	40.00	23.75	72.50	3.75	0	0	3.63
GULF	23	82.61	17.39	69.57	26.09	0	0	4.35	3.15
HOLMES	60	50.00	50.00	100.00	0	0	0	0	6.22
JACKSON	71	54.93	45.07	64.79	29.58	2.82	2.82	0	3.31
JEFFERSON	9	33.33	66.67	66.67	33.33	0	0	0	1.62
LEON	200	51.50	48.50	50.50	49.00	0.5	0	0	2.74
LIBERTY	12	66.67	33.33	83.33	8.33	0	0	0	4.76
MADISON	80	68.75	31.25	48.75	51.25	0	0	0	8.80
OKALOOSA	428	58.18	41.82	86.92	11.21	0.23	1.64	0	5.61
SANTA ROSA	168	52.38	47.62	97.02	1.19	0.6	1.19	0	4.03
TAYLOR	113	48.67	51.33	55.75	44.25	0	0	0	12.20
WAKULLA	36	55.56	44.44	88.89	11.11	0	0	0	4.78
WALTON	57	47.37	52.63	98.25	1.75	0	0	0	4.99
WASHINGTON	34	50.00	50.00	76.47	23.53	0	0	0	2.83
CROWN									
ALACHUA	208	55.77	44.23	68.75	29.81	0	0.96	0.48	2.93
BAKER	96	62.50	37.50	86.46	13.54	0	0	0	9.21
BRADFORD	95	50.53	49.47	76.84	23.16	0	0	0	8.25
CITRUS	175	57.14	42.86	97.71	2.29	0	0	0	5.71
CLAY	329	64.44	35.56	88.75	8.21	1.52	0.91	0.61	5.43
COLUMBIA	128	58.59	41.41	78.13	21.88	0	0	0	5.96
DIXIE	48	48.98	51.02	93.84	6.12	0	2.04	0	10.69
DUVAL	1900	58.74	41.26	62.00	35.79	1.53	0.68	0	6.73
FLAGLER	26	69.23	30.77	53.85	46.15	0	0	0	2.99
GILCHRIST	30	56.67	43.33	96.67	3.33	0	0	0	6.57
HAMILTON	46	60.87	39.13	67.39	26.09	6.52	0	0	6.75
LAFAYETTE	11	63.64	36.36	81.82	18.18	0	0	0	3.60
LEVY	82	56.10	43.90	86.59	12.20	1.22	0	0	7.12
MARION	631	56.26	43.74	76.70	21.71	1.43	0.16	0	7.80
NASSAU	137	64.96	35.04	83.21	16.79	0	0	0	5.87
PUTNAM	295	55.59	44.41	73.56	24.75	1.69	0	0	9.90
ST. JOHNS	270	53.33	46.67	81.11	17.78	1.11	0	0	9.93
SUWANNEE	57	59.65	40.35	85.96	14.04	0	0	0	3.73
UNION	17	70.59	29.41	76.47	17.65	5.88	0	0	4.00
TOTAL	4522								6.47
EAST CENTRAL									
BREVARD	784	57.78	42.22	82.53	14.80	1.91	0.77	0	5.00
INDIAN RIVER	285	54.39	45.61	78.60	17.54	3.86	0	0	9.17
LAKE	378	57.94	42.06	80.69	17.20	1.85	0.26	0	6.85
OKEECHOBEE	217	60.83	39.17	75.58	11.98	0.46	0.92	0	16.14
ORANGE	1141	56.53	43.47	66.78	25.42	7.19	0.44	0.18	4.24
OSCEOLA	450	57.11	42.89	77.78	6.22	15.11	0.89	0	11.17
ST. LUCIE	469	62.26	37.74	67.59	31.77	0.64	0	0	10.23
SEMINOLE	473	60.04	39.96	71.88	24.52	2.33	1.27	0	3.46
SUMTER	115	63.00	37.00	76.52	20.87	1.74	0.87	0	8.18
VOLUSIA	765	59.87	40.13	78.43	19.74	1.44	0.39	0	6.15
WEST CENTRAL									
CHARLOTTE	335	55.22	44.78	93.13	4.78	1.49	0.60	0	10.06
DE SOTO	41	46.34	53.66	90.24	9.76	0	0	0	4.10
GLADES	12	41.67	58.33	75.00	8.33	8.33	0	0	5.52
HARDEE	127	72.44	27.56	62.99	8.66	28.35	0	0	12.67
HERNANDO	126	59.52	40.38	96.03	2.38	1.59	0	0	3.96
HIGHLANDS	152	54.61	45.39	72.37	20.39	5.92	0	1.32	6.41
HILLSBOROUGH	2008	58.91	41.09	69.52	20.92	8.47	0.80	0.30	5.68
LEE	1015	56.45	43.55	78.33	14.38	7.09	0.10	0.10	6.98
MANATEE	269	63.57	36.43	80.67	15.99	2.60	0.74	0	4.12
PASCO	536	60.97	39.03	92.16	3.29	4.29	0	0.26	7.06
PINELLAS	2429	55.64	44.36	80.25	17.00	1.03	1.52	0.21	6.32
POLK	1611	56.06	43.94	79.80	17.43	2.36	0.28	0.14	6.02
SARASOTA	427	61.19	38.81	85.83	11.51	1.85	0.62	0	5.78
SOUTH									
BROWARD	2414	58.62	41.32	61.52	29.95	7.62	0.62	0.25	5.84
COLLIER	370	51.89	48.11	62.78	8.65	28.49	0.27	0.53	7.38
DADE	7367	59.05	40.95	20.13	37.02	42.32	0.49	0.04	6.85
HENDRY	120	55.83	44.17	57.50	25.50	16.33	0	1.67	8.23
MARTIN	226	57.62	42.38	81.86	11.50	5.75	0.88	0	6.74
MONROE	151	61.26	38.74	70.16	4.71	25.13	0	0	5.01
PALM BEACH	1905	60.68	39.32	61.31	25.98	11.92	0.58	0.21	7.27
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	24.21	13.08	0.6	0.13	6.84

Appendix B

Informational Letter to Parents

39

March 5, 1990

Dear Parents or Guardians,

We are, now, well into the second semester of kindergarten. The children have grown physically, mentally, and socially. They have acquired many skills in preparation for the most important year of their school career. First grade is the foundation that determines the structural strength of subsequent years.

In order to meet the needs of first graders, the teachers must begin instruction at eight-thirty (8:30) each morning. Children who are tardy or absent miss the teaching of some fundamental reading concepts and, often, do not achieve to their fullest potential. Research indicates that poor attendance is the strongest predictor of future drop-outs.

Therefore, the _____ Elementary kindergarten teachers and I are beginning a program to improve the attendance and punctuality rates of our kindergarten students. Since behavior patterns are hard to change we think beginning now is very important.

Please join us in helping your child develop behavior patterns for success. The students and I

will meet at scheduled times during the next ten weeks to discuss the importance of being at school, play games which will reinforce this principle, reward improvement, and perform "fun" learning activities, such as simple science and art projects.

If you have questions about this project, please feel free to contact me at 542-2156 or send a note by your child.

Sincerely,

Betty Schofield

Betty Schofield
Primary Specialist
_____Elementary

Appendix C

"I am Special" Buttons

I'M SPECIAL BUTTONS

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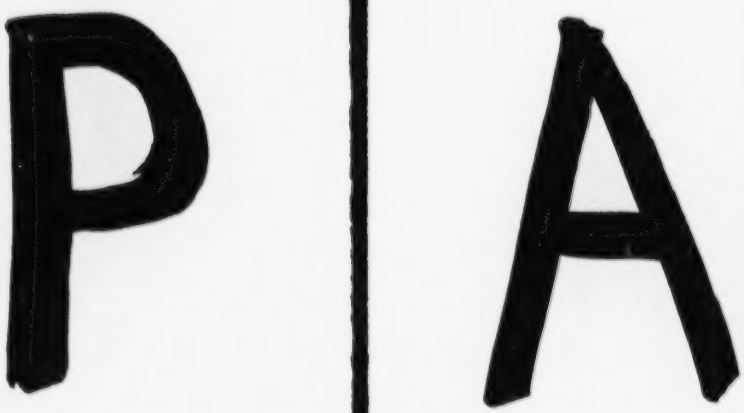
Appendix D

Hero Method Behavioral Technique

Place cards face down on chalkboard. Turn over one card each day all students are present.

44



Happy Feelings Reproducible

Name _____

46

Lois feels happy when she thinks about her friends. Eating ice cream and playing with her doll makes her feel happy too. Find pictures of things that make you feel happy. Paste them on this page and then share it with your class.

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Appendix F

Three-tiered Rainbow

During a period of three weeks, each child in the program will color one space each day present and/or punctual.

Name _____

Sally feels sad. She had a bad day at school. Draw a picture of something you could do to help Sally feel better. Share your picture with your class.

50

Appendix G

"Bad Day at School" Reproducible

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Appendix H

Letter to Parents

Dear Parents,

We have just finished the fourth week of our program to improve attendance. Eight of the fifteen children have improved their attendance and four of them have been at school every day since we started the program. One student has improved his punctuality rate to 100 percent.

In addition, Mrs. _____ class has earned a party since the students had perfect attendance for five days. Mr. _____ and Mrs. _____ classes are working hard to earn their party.

I am very proud of all the students who try to be at school every day. Thanks for all your help and encouragement.

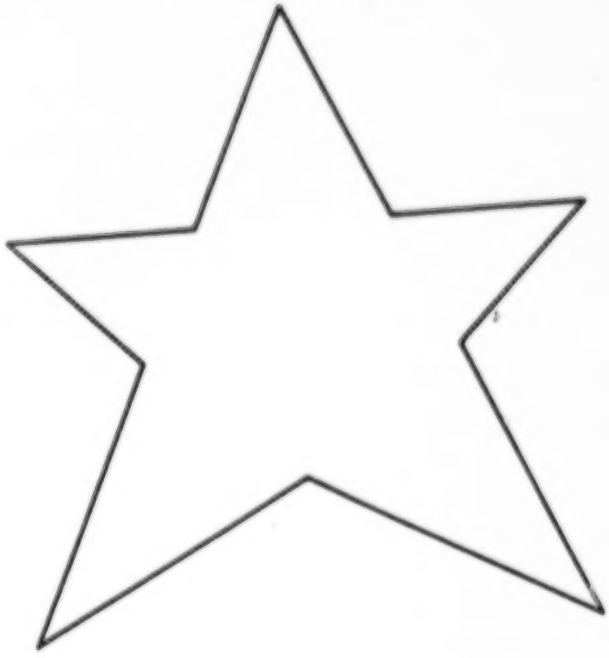
KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK!!!!

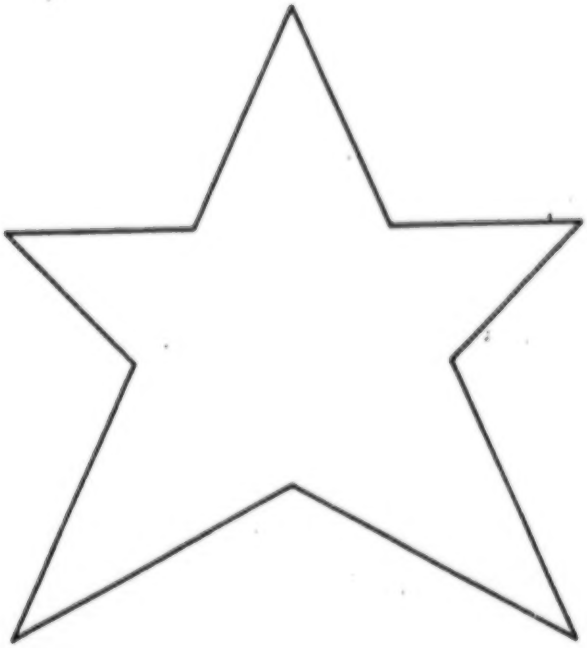
Betty Schofield
Primary Specialist

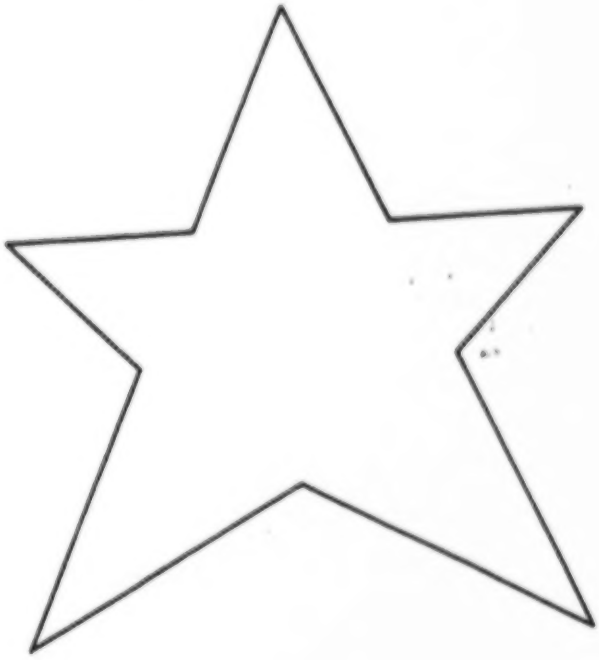
Appendix I

Star Buttons

54







LISTENING EXERCISE

Teacher Directions: Read each story aloud. Students should circle the face that shows how the children feel.

1. Jimmy opened his eyes and looked anxiously around the dark bedroom. He was sure he had heard a noise! Now the room was strangely quiet. Jimmy could see the outline of a large figure standing inside his closet through the open door. Slowly, the figure began to move... How did Jimmy feel? 56
2. Tiffany sat quietly in her chair. Mrs. Brown began to hand out the graded spelling tests. Tiffany knew she had studied all the spelling words but she was not sure shehad remembered the correct answers for the test. Suddenly, Mrs. Brown handed Tiffany a paper. Written on the top of the page was a large red A. How did Tiffany feel?
3. Steve had looked everywhere! Where could Fluffie be? He began to search the house again, under the couches and beds, inside drawers and closets. Finally, Steve sat down on the front porch and cried. His new kitten was lost! How did Steve feel?
4. Sally was outside playing with her new ball. She was learning to do some neat tricks bouncing the ball against a brick wall. While Sally was throwing the ball over her shoulder with her back toward the wall, two older boys ran around the wall, grabbed the ball and began to play catch. "Give me my ball!", Sally shouted. The two boys just laughed and ran away. How did Sally feel?
5. Keith looked out his window. He saw his little sister, Jane, flying her kite. Suddenly, a big gust of wind lifted the kite into a tree. Jane began to cry. Keith ran outside and saw that the kite was stuck on a branch out of Jane's reach. "Don't worry, I'll help you", Keith said. He climbed up on a low branch and pulled the kite to safety. Jane smiled as Keith handed her the kite. She reached up and gave Keith a big hug. How did Keith feel?

(TWO PAGE ACTIVITY)

Name _____

57

	HAPPY	MAD	SAD	SCARED
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				

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Appendix K

Letter to Parents

Dear Parents,

I just completed figuring our attendance percentages for kindergarten students and I am very pleased with the results. During this attendance period, ten children of the targeted group have shown improvement in attendance. The student who is working on being punctual has continued to be successful.

Mrs. _____ and Mrs. _____ classes are working hard to earn their second party. Let's help them get this party before the last day of school.

Please continue to give them that extra boost when they don't feel like "rising and shining" so early. Thanks for helping.

Betty Schofield
Primary Specialist

Appendix L

Blue Ribbon Buttons

61